NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5968 JULY 7, 1978
DAVID LENT/ROME

CHIRAC IN ROME

ANNCR:

THE MAYOR OF PARIS CAME TO ROME ON THURSDAY, AND REAFFIRMED AN OLD AND DEEP RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE TWO JEWELS IN THE CROWN OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION. VOA'S DAVID LENT MARCHED UP ROME'S CAPITOLINE HILL TO ATTEND THE CEREMONIAL HIGH POINT OF THE VISIT.

VOICE:

FOR TWENTY YEARS, ROME AND PARIS HAVE HAD A FORMAL RELATIONSHIP MAKING THEM SISTER CITIES. BUT THE VISIT OF JACQUES CHIRAC TO THE ROME CITY HALL ON THE CAPITOLINE HILL DESIGNED BY MICHELANGELO REPRESENTED A "FIRST." IT WAS THE FIRST FOREIGN VISIT BY A MAYOR OF PARIS -- A CITY, WHICH, UNTIL MISTER CHIRAC'S ELECTION LAST YEAR -- HAD NOT HAD A MAYOR FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY. INDEED, MISTER CHIRAC CONFIDED THAT HE HAD RESOLVED ON HIS ELECTION THAT HIS FIRST FOREIGN VISIT IN HIS CAPACITY AS PARIS MAYOR WOULD BE TO ROME.

HIS HOST WAS PROFESSOR JIULIO ARGAN, MAYOR OF ROME, WHO STRESSED THAT CULTURALLY AND HISTORICALLY SPEAKING, THE PROFOUND AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES REACHES BACK INTO THE MIDDLE AGES. PROFESSOR ARGAN, BY PROFESSION AN ART HISTORIAN, SAID THAT THE CULTURE DERIVED FROM THE TWO CITIES WAS AN EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD. THIS SPIRIT OF ANCIENT COLLABORATION, HE SAID, IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TODAY WHEN WE ARE CREATING A NEW IMAGE OF EUROPE. IN HIS RESPONSE, MAYOR CHIRAC STRESSED WHAT HE CALLED "THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE. "WE ARE CO-HEIRS" HE SAID, "OF THE SAME CIVILIZATION." THE MAYOR OF PARIS SAID HE WAS ALSO BRINGING FEELINGS OF SYMPATHY THAT

SPONTANEOUSLY AROSE FROM THE HEARTS OF THE FRENCH, AND THE PEOPLE OF PARIS AT A TIME WHEN A MOST CRUEL TRIAL AFFLICTED ITALY. HE WAS SPEAKING OF THE KIDNAPPED MURDER OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER ALDO MORO, WHICH SHOCKED THIS NATION. AND THEN MISTER CHIRAC SAID,

TAPE: CUT ONE -- CHIRAC

"WHERE BETTER THEN IN ROME CAN WE FEEL THE SOLIDARITY THAT LINKS US ON ESSENTIAL MATTERS, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND A CERTAIN CONCEPTION WE HAVE OF MAN AND HIS SPIRITUAL VALUES. WE RECIPIENTS OF THESE TIES, HE SAID, HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SUBSTAIN THEM AND TO PASS THEM ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS."

VOICE:

MISTER CHIRAC SAID THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL TIES BETWEEN ROME AND PARIS IMPEL PEOPLE TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULT TIMES THROUGH WHICH WE ARE GOING. AS MAYOR OF PARIS, MISTER CHIRAC IS ENGAGED IN A BATTLE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING OVER THE CITY BUDGET. AND HIS CHALLENGES TO THE FRENCH PRESIDENT'S POLICIES IN OTHER FIELDS HAVE SHARPENED IN RECENT DAYS. SO MISTER CHIRAC'S VISIT TO ROME SEEMED TO HAVE A DUAL PURPOSE. NOT ONLY WAS IT DESIGNED TO RENEW A FORMAL SISTER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROME AND PARIS, IT ALSO SEEMED DESIGNED TO REPRESENT MISTER CHIRAC'S FIRST VENTURE INTO REINFORCING THE PRESTIGE OF HIS NEW JOB FOR WHATEVER PURPOSES HE MAY HAVE IN MIND.

WJL/PY